

## LESSON NUMBER 9

### TASK: GROUP DEVELOPMENT THEORY

**CONDITION:** In a small group discussion environment.

#### STANDARD:

- Identify the working definition of a group.
- Identify formal and informal groups.
- Identify the reasons people join groups.
- Describe the four stages of group development.
- Identify group task and maintenance functions.

**TIME OF INSTRUCTION:** 2 Hours

### PART I: THE FORMATION OF GROUPS

1. *Define group:* A group is more than two persons who interact with each other in such a manner that the behavior or performance of one is influenced by the behavior or performance of the others.

2. *Two types of groups:* formal groups (task oriented) and informal groups (social oriented).

3. *Reasons for group formation:* security, social, esteem, proximity, attraction, and ordered to.

*Discussion Question:* What are some examples for each of the reasons for group formation?

4. *The five stages of group development:* Form, Storm, Norm, Perform, and Adjourning Stage.

a. First Stage - **Form** - The behavior of the group members can be characterized as:

(1) Dependent on direction: Things like what a person's job is within the group and who is in charge are very important.

(2) Members are polite: Letting people see your real identity is not very easy in group formation. Many false fronts are used to cover areas considered to be problems.

(3) Introduction and sharing of information: The basics of who is in the group. Information like where everyone is from, where they have served, MOS, etc..

(4) Stereotyping individuals based on first impressions: Deciding what a person is like based on first impressions is the most common problem in group formation. For most people, a first impression is lasting, whether or not it is correct.

(5) Conversations are about safe acceptable topics: These subjects may include weather, sports, duty stations, not normally race, religion, etc..

(6) Avoid disclosure, feedback, and interpreting non-verbals: Questions like, “how do you feel about that statement?” or “Why are you frowning?” are not common during this phase. Also statements of personal feelings such as “I feel afraid” are seldom heard. The time a group remains in this stage depends on the structure, task, and leadership.

b. Second Stage - **Storm** - The behavior of the members of the group can be characterized as:

(1) Counter-dependent: This means that each group member strongly feels the need to take care of himself/herself during this stage.

(2) Bid for power: Statements like “I think we should do it this way,” are very common.

(3) Competitive: Trying to win every situation, or out argue on conflicting points.

(4) Rationalization: This is a thought process that ensures we feel that we are right regardless of what others may say.

(5) Close-minded: Not listening to others point of view and discounting their opinion as worthless.

(6) Conflict/Hostility: Emotions run high during this stage. Individuals in total disagreement with the group are common.

(7) Cliques are formed: People with like viewpoints tend to get together in an “us against them” type of attitude.

(8) Unexpressed individual needs.

(9) Creativity suppressed: With so many ideas suppressed, the group gets little accomplished toward the task at hand during this stage.

(10) Try to reach resolution by vote, compromise, or arbitration.

c. Third Stage - **Norm** - The behavior of the members of the group can be characterized as:

(1) Independent and constructive: Group members are able to operate as a group on their own.

(2) Real listening takes place: The mood is much more open-minded during this stage.

(3) Attempts to gain and maintain control lessen: Individuals no longer try to control the movement of the group.

(4) Progress toward objectives: The job starts to get done.

(5) Creativity begins: Group member's trust each other enough to be expressive.

(6) Roles identified.

(7) The leader may become somewhat less identifiable or necessary to the group. The job of each member of the group will be defined more clearly.

d. Fourth Stage - **Perform** - The group's behavior can be defined as:

(1) Independent.

(2) High group morale and esprit.

(3) Intense group loyalty.

(4) Individual creativity is encouraged.

(5) Disagreement is OK.

(6) No cliques.

(7) Group adopts an identification symbol.

e. Fifth Stage - **Adjourning** - The behavior of the group can be characterized as:

(1) Less task ability.

(2) Regression to less productive behavior.

(3) Separation, grieving behaviors.

(4) Re-definition.

(5) Termination or mini-death.

*Discussion Question:* What stage of group development would you classify your squad, section, or platoon?

## **PART II: THE TASK AND MAINTENANCE FUNCTIONS**

### *1. Task Functions are required behavior in selecting and carrying out a group task.*

a. *Information seeking or giving.* Requesting or supplying factual material about a group concern; asking for and giving ideas or generalizations.

b. *Opinion seeking or giving.* Requesting or supplying opinions and beliefs, evaluating, or helping the group find out what members think or feel.

c. *Initiating activity.* Starting the discussions, proposing tasks, goals, or solutions; defining a problem or an aspect of a problem.

d. *Clarifying/elaborating.* Giving example, paraphrasing, interpreting, developing meetings, or building on other's ideas.

e. *Coordinating.* Showing relationships among ideas or suggestions.

f. *Summarizing.* Restating information, opinions, or suggestions in concise form after the group has discussed them.

g. *Consensus testing.* Sending up a "trial balloon" to see if the group is nearing a conclusion, identifying points where agreement is not yet reached, or asking for a group commitment by vote or general agreement.

*Discussion Question:* Which of the task functions do you consider the most important and why?

### *2. Maintenance functions (within the group).*

a. *Gatekeeping.* Trying to keep communication channels open, and helping others to contribute or participate in the discussion.

b. *Climate making and encouraging.* Developing and maintaining a friendly, warm, relaxed, and accepting, atmosphere.

c. *Harmonizing.* Reducing and reconciling misunderstandings, disagreements, and conflicts; reducing or relieving negative feelings.

d. *Compromising.* When one's own ideas or status is involved in a disagreement, offering to seek mutually acceptable alternatives.

e. *Expressing personal feelings.* Letting others know what you feel to prevent bad feeling from blocking progress; to give positive feedback when good feelings will help the group's progress.

f. *Expressing group feelings.* Summarizing what the group feeling is sensed to be, and describing reactions of the group to ideas or solutions.

g. *Standard setting.* Expressing the standard or criteria for use in choosing content or procedures.

*Discussion Question:* Which of the maintenance function do you consider the most important and why?

